

Message Text

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ACTION EB-03

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STOCKHOLM 769

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ETRD, SW
SUBJECT: MEETING WITH MINISTER OF COMMERCE

1. MINISTER OF COMMERCE STAFFAN BURENSTAM LINDER ASKED ME ON FAIRLY SHORT NOTICE TO CALL ON FEBRUARY 17 . DURING A SOMEWHAT UNSTRUCTURED HALF-HOUR MEETING LINDER TALKED MAINLY ABOUT THE SPECIALTY STEEL IMPORT SITUATION, URGING IN PARTICULAR THE ABOLITION OF QUOTAS. TOWARDS THE END OF OUR TALK HE RAISED THE POSSIBILITY OF VISITING THE US IN MARCH TO TALK OVER SPECIALTY STEEL AND OTHER QUESTIONS SUCH AS CIEC.

2. FOR THE MOST PART LINDER REPEATED FAMILIAR ARGUMENTS ABOUT THE HARMFULNESS OF QUOTAS, ESPECIALLY TO SMALLER COUNTRIES LIKE SWEDEN, AND THE DANGER OF THEIR SPREADING LIKE A CONTAGIOUS DISEASE. HE REMINDED ME OF THE TRADE PLEDGE TAKEN IN OECD. (NOTING THE INCONSISTENCY OF SWEDEN'S SHOE QUOTAS WITH HIS ARGUMENT, LINDER SAID HE WAS CONFIDENT SHOE QUOTAS WOULD BE LIFTED THIS YEAR DESPITE SWEDEN'S DIFFICULT ECONOMIC SITUATION.) HE REFERRED TO THE POSSIBILITY THAT SWEDEN MIGHT INVOKE COMPENSATION FOR OUR STEEL QUOTAS UNDER GATT, BUT SAID NO DECISION HAS YET BEEN MADE ON THIS MOVE. LINDER SEEMED AWARE THAT A REALLOCATION OF SHORTFALLS IN STEEL QUOTAS WOULD TAKE
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PLACE SOON BUT MADE NO SPECIFIC PLEAS ON BEHALF OF SWEDEN; RATHER HE DIRECTED HIS REMARKS TO THE GENERAL UNDESIRABILITY OF QUOTAS.

3. TOWARDS THE END OF OUR TALK LINDER ASKED IF IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF HE WERE TO VISIT THE US IN MARCH TO DISCUSS SPECIALTY STEEL AS WELL AS OTHER MATTERS SUCH AS

CIEC.

4. I TOLD LINDER I WOULD, OF COURSE, REPORT HIS REMARKS TO WASHINGTON. (WE AGREED THAT ANY DISCUSSION ON RE-ALLOCATIONS SHOULD TAKE PLACE BETWEEN THE SWEDISH EMBASSY AND APPROPRIATE US AGENCIES IN WASHINGTON.) AS FOR A POSSIBLE VISIT, I SAID WE WERE IN FAVOR OF FURTHER HIGH-LEVEL VISITS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES, AND NOTED SOME UPCOMING VISITS INCLUDING MINISTER OF ECONOMY BOHMAN IN APRIL. I SAID THAT MARCH MIGHT BE TOO SOON FOR THE MOST USEFUL DIALOGUE ON THE QUESTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION, SINCE OUR NEW ADMINISTRATION WAS ADDRESSING MANY PROBLEMS AT THIS TIME. HOWEVER, I SAID I WOULD ALSO REPORT THIS POSSIBILITY OF A VISIT TO WASHINGTON AND INVITE THE DEPARTMENT'S COMMENTS; I ALSO SUGGESTED THAT SWEDISH AMBASSADOR WACHTMEISTER MIGHT USEFULLY LOOK INTO THIS MATTER IN WASHINGTON.

5. COMMENT: BOTH THE ECONOMIC COUNSELOR, WHO ACCOMPANIED ME, AND I FELT THAT LINDER DID NOT MAKE HIS POINT (OR POINTS) TOO CLEARLY. IT MAY BE SIMPLY THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT, WHICH IS PREOCCUPIED WITH SWEDEN'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS (INCLUDING EMPHATICALLY THE PROBLEMS OF THE STEEL INDUSTRY), WANTED THE MATTER RAISED AGAIN WITH THE USG. LIFTING THE QUOTAS WOULD BE A MOST WELCOME STEP IN SWEDEN, AND THE FALLDIN GOVERNMENT WANTS TO BE ON RECORD, PRESUMABLY, AS ENCOURAGING THIS IN EVERY WAY POSSIBLE. ANOTHER POSSIBILITY IS THAT LINDER REALLY WANTED TO EXPLORE THE IDEA OF AN EARLY

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VISIT TO THE US, SINCE HE WOULD LIKE VERY MUCH TO BE THE FIRST MINISTER OF THE FALLDIN GOVERNMENT TO MAKE AN OFFICIAL VISIT. (IT SHOULD BE NOTED ALSO THAT BOTH HE AND BOHMAN ARE MODERATE PARTY MEMBERS, SO THE PARTY MAY BE INTERESTED IN PUSHING ITS US CONNECTIONS.) I DO BELIEVE AT SOME STAGE BEFORE TOO LONG IT WOULD BE WISE FOR US TO INVITE LINDER, BUT I THINK IT WOULD BE ADVISABLE TO CONSIDER THE MATTER CAREFULLY AND CONSULT WITH OTHER SWEDISH SPOKESMAN BEFORE SETTING ANY DATES. THE VIEWS OF THE DEPARTMENT AND OTHER INTERESTED AGENCIES WOULD BE WELCOME.

SMITH

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